

1: Federal W-5 (no date) 1986  
 NN23 Sea Islanders NN23  
 Georgia

322  
 532

• [412]  
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[481]  
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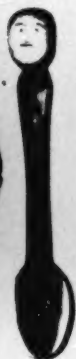
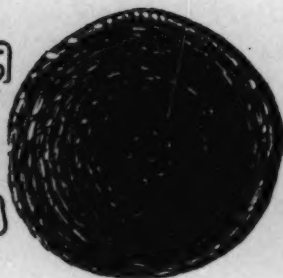
IIa. Carved wooden spoon



IIb. Carved wooden stick  
 with figure

[285]  
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[412]  
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IIc. Coil basket and carved wooden objects

[Following p. xxii-B]

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XVb. Katie Brown with pestle and mortar

[following p. xxxii - R]

DRUMS AND SHADOWS

285 Near this section lives a Negro basketmaker \* who claims that he is carrying on the tradition of his ancestors. He stated that for generations the men of his family had engaged in wood carving, basket making, and various phases of weaving, and that the craft had been passed on from father to son.<sup>70</sup> He himself only makes baskets. White oak and bulrushes are selected as the material from which to make the baskets and they are stitched with scrub palmetto. Those made of bulrushes are of the coil type (Plate IIc).<sup>A</sup> A kind of thin rope is made from this grass which is then twisted around and around and sewn tightly together. The baskets made from white oak are plaited.<sup>70</sup> The types of baskets include hampers, flat clothes baskets, farm and shopping baskets, and the popular "fanner" which the Negro venders balance gracefully on their heads as they walk about the city, displaying a colorful array of merchandise.

322 Some years ago an unusual discovery was made near this district when a boy noticed a carved spoon \*\* lying on top of a rubbish heap. This spoon (Plate IIa),<sup>A</sup> which has been carefully preserved, is made of teak, and, judging from the dark polished surface of the wood and its general appearance, it might well be more than a century old. The bowl is shallow and about two by three inches and the whole length about seven inches. The most unusual feature of the spoon is the carved figure of the disproportionate little man forming the handle. Of particular interest are the flat cranium, the exaggerated ears, the gash-like mouth, the queerly shaped nose, the long dangling arms, and the short tapering legs which appear to be far too small for the rest of the body.<sup>41b</sup>

794  
346 Near the Old Fort is the Peace Mission of Father Divine.† This comparatively new religious sect has an estimated mem-

\* John Haynes, 935 Wheaton Street.

\*\* Property of Edward A. Sieg, 128 West Jones Street.

† Though the meetings of Father Divine are common to many parts of the United States, especially in the North, where white worshippers form a sizable proportion of the followers of Father Divine, this description ac-

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FROGTOWN AND CURRYTOWN

262 "Can you tell us why?" we queried, but she only shook her  
777 head.

"All I know is dat dey's bad luck. I foun dat out, an I  
wohn leh one come in muh house."

• 412 Handicraft objects in this section were more numerous  
than in many of the other communities. We found a most  
unusual brush \* made from the palmetto.<sup>40a</sup> It was about  
[824] four inches in length and two inches wide; both bristles and  
back had been made from a single piece of the rough fiber  
of the palmetto bark, spliced into splinters on one surface to  
form the bristles.

322 The work of two wood carvers was brought to our atten-  
532 tion. One of the carvers \*\* made a specialty of small wooden  
figures (Plate Ia, Ib).<sup>41</sup> He showed us several full length  
human figures, two or three busts mounted on square blocks  
of wood, and two oddly shaped objects, each with mask-like  
features carved on one surface.<sup>41i</sup> When we remarked on the  
originality of his work and its symmetry of design, he said  
simply, "I jis picked it up wen I wuzn wukin."

The other carver † had made several nondescript figures,  
but we were chiefly interested in two linked wooden chains  
(Plate Ia).<sup>42</sup> One of these, which had an attached box with a  
ball enclosed, was similar to a chain previously shown us by  
another man in the community. Each man had cut his chain  
with all its details from a single block of wood.<sup>70c, 4</sup>

754 In Frogtown and Currytown there is intense interest  
775 shown in witches, spirits, and conjure. Personal experiences  
were related to us by several old residents, who had come in  
contact with supernatural elements.

775 Old Henry Gamble ‡ told us that he has been accustomed  
[115] to "seein tings" since childhood. Particularly on rainy  
nights ghosts appear to him. He said, "Sometimes dey float

\* Made by and property of Professor Redmond, Park Avenue and West  
Broad Street, Currytown.

\*\* Jerome Carter, 445 Jefferson Street, Frogtown.

† Preston Coleman, 538 Charles Street, Frogtown.

‡ Henry Gamble, 519 West Broad Street, Currytown.

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BROWNVILLE

Walking sticks (Plate

322 IIIa, IIIb) were brought to our attention. One had a lizard  
 532 carved on its handle,\* while the likeness of a snake twisted  
 its body realistically about the length of the stick.<sup>50, 70a-b</sup>  
 On a similar stick of dull, yellowish wood the tense, erect  
 head of the large reptile which wrapped itself about the cane  
 formed the handle.<sup>50</sup> In the gaping mouth was held a ball.  
 Even the smallest detail had been delicately and artistically  
 executed. We could learn little of the history of the stick ex-  
 cept that it had been carved many years ago by an old Negro  
 who had given it to the present owner and soon afterward  
 moved away from the section.\*\* The snake decorating <sup>50</sup> a  
 third cane had eyes of rhinestones<sup>41c</sup> which gleamed and  
 flashed as the stick was moved about.†

322 Crude hand-carved wooden table utensils were in use in  
 several households.<sup>70a-b</sup> We were shown a fork (Plate IIc)‡  
 • 412 with only two prongs set wide apart on the far sides of the  
 base. One of the spoons (Plate IIc)§ was about the size of an  
 average tablespoon, but with a bowl of considerably greater  
 depth.‡

322 One Negro showed much ingenuity in the carving of a  
 linked chain § with a box-like object attached (Plate Ia).<sup>†</sup>  
 532 Inside the box was a small wooden ball. This entire contrap-  
 tion had been made from one solid piece of wood.<sup>70c-b</sup> An-  
 (524) other man employed his spare time in the carving of small  
 wooden dolls, jointed and so designed that they could stand  
 alone.<sup>41c-1</sup> §§

422 An old Negro (Plate V), living in very poor circumstances  
 (428) owned a number of interesting objects.|| These he said he  
 had inherited from a grandfather who had come to this  
 country from Santo Domingo, West Indies. Among the ob-

\* Made by and property of William Brown, Florence Street.

\*\* Property of Henry Haynes, 41st and Harden Streets.

† Crawford Smith, 1704 Ogeechee Avenue.

‡ Made by and property of Alfred Wücher, 610 West 31st Street.

§ Ibid.

§§ Made by and property of Marion Ralph, 2411 Harden Street.

|| Julian Linder, 612 West 30th Street.

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DRUMS AND SHADOWS

115 one-quarter Indian. While we were on the subject of Indians, he remembered a rusty part of an old Indian gun which he had found in the vicinity. Displaying this, he explained in detail how the trigger struck a piece of flint, thereby igniting the powder.

322 We inquired about his wood carving and he showed us  
532 some of the wooden figures about which we had been told.  
• (412) One of these, a spoon of cedar, was about a foot in length and had the roughly-sculptured head of a man on its handle (Plate IIc).<sup>41a</sup> The head was square in shape, the features were only slightly raised, and the eyes were nail heads.<sup>41b</sup> Another item was a frog<sup>41c</sup> which, with eyes of brass nail heads, crouched on a block of wood (Plate IVc).<sup>41d</sup> The frog and the stand had been carved from a solid piece of wood<sup>70a, b</sup> and lightly varnished.

As we left, the old man promised us, "Wen I gits muh hans back intuh use, I hopes tuh cahve a cane wid a gatuh on it lak duh ones I made long ago. Wen I do, I sho sen it tuh yuh."

We had no idea that we would hear from him again, but a few months later he wrote us that he had made a stick especially for us. This proved to be of stout cedar carved with a large alligator and topped with the bust of a Negro man cut all in one with the body of the stick and painted black to signify his race (Plate IVa).<sup>6</sup> The smooth, almost square, protruding skull of the figure, its small, high-set ears, broad mouth, blue bead eyes driven in by minute steel nailheads, and little short arms with four-fingered hands are all noteworthy points. The alligator's eyes are also blue beads driven in by nailheads.

361 After leaving William Rogers, we retraced our way back over the winding dirt roadway into Darien and from the town we drove eastward through a residential section. The houses here were substantial and attractive, surrounded by

A, [See Category 322, plate following p. xxxii-B--Analyst]

B, [See Category 322, plate following p. xxxii-D--Analyst]

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DRUMS AND SHADOWS

795 during an ebb tide and Lawrence hastened to assure us,  
783 "Yes'm, dey alluz hole duh baptism on a high ebb tide. Das  
so duh tide will carry duh sin out." 63

551 Had the old man ever known any people who had been  
named for the days of the week?

"I knowd one man name Fridy, one dat wuz name Satdy  
an anudduh he name wuz Toosdy. Guess dey name um dat-  
away cuz dey wuz bawn on doze days." 90

262 Baker told us that many people in the section refused to  
777 eat certain foods, believing bad luck would follow if they ate  
them.

"Deah's lots dataway now," he commented. "Lots uh  
folks dohn eat some food cuz ef dey did dey say it would  
bring bad luck on duh parents. Some dohn eat rice, some  
dohn eat egg, an some dohn eat chicken." 65

829 "Muh gran, she Rachel Grant, she use tuh tell me bout lot  
782 uh deze tings. I membuh she use tuh pray ebry day at sun-  
rise, at middle day and den at sunset. She alluz face duh  
sun an wen she finish prayin she alluz bow tuh duh sun. She  
517 tell me bout duh slabes wut could fly too. Ef dey didn lak  
829 it on duh plantation, dey jis take wing an fly right back tuh  
789 Africa.

412 "Muh gran say dey use tuh eat wid oystuh shells. Use  
237 um fuh spoons. Wen dey go tuh shoot duh gun, dey ketch  
411 duh fyuh wid a rag an flint."

789 We asked him if he had ever heard of a hoe that worked  
by itself and he told us that he had often heard this story  
regarding the hoe 99 and that he had also heard many tales  
about a magic rail splitting wood without anyone touch-  
ing it.

825 Suddenly the quiet of the afternoon was shattered by a  
high reed-like whistling sound. It continued for quite a  
time, then stopped as abruptly as it had started. Was it a  
person or an animal? It was impossible for us to tell.

"Das a spiduh, missus," Baker explained. "It come roun

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S A P E L O I S L A N D

361 Small Negro settlements are scattered at the north end of  
 491 Sapelo and are reached by winding roads that cut through  
 461 the tropical woodlands and brush. The Negroes are de-  
 scendants of the slaves of the plantation era. Many lead an  
 easy, carefree life which consists chiefly of fishing, crabbing,  
 and cultivating a small patch of garden, while others engage  
 in regular employment at the sawmill or in the company  
 offices.

178 Living an isolated island existence, these Negroes have  
 preserved many customs and beliefs of their ancestors, as  
 well as the dialect of the older coastal Negro. An old oxcart  
 (493) (Plate XVI) jogging along a tree shaded road is a familiar  
 (412) sight, and under the guidance of a Negro boy named Julius  
 (124) we discovered instances of crude wooden implements in com-  
 mon usage. The many Negroes interviewed gave a graphic  
 picture of survival elements that have persisted since the  
 days when slave ships brought their ancestors to the new  
 country.

115 One of the oldest inhabitants is Katie Brown (Plate  
 XV), whose grandmother, Margaret, was a daughter of  
 Belali Mohomet, the Mohammedan slave driver of Thomas  
 Spalding. Katie, sunning herself on the back steps of her  
 small house, was disposed to be gracious to us. Shaking her  
 (123) head at the size of the shoes brought to her as an incentive to  
 conversation, she relented at the sight of some pipe tobacco  
 and began to talk:

533 "I dunno bout drums at chuches. Use tuh hab um long  
 534 time ago, but not now on duh ilun,—leas I ain heah um.  
 521 Hahves time wuz time fuh drums. Den dey hab big times."  
 Wen hahves in, dey hab big gadderin. Dey beat drum,  
 rattle dry goad wid seed in um, an beat big flat tin  
 plates.<sup>23, 25</sup> Dey shout an moob roun in succe an look lak  
 mahch goin tuh heabm. Hahves festival, dey call it."

764 In response to our query about "set-ups" Katie replied,

\* Katie Brown, Sapelo Island.

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DRUMS AND SHADOWS

829 Hestuh she Shad's gran. Yuh knows Shad? Bentoo she duh younges. Magret she my gran."

We asked if Belali Mohomet had been related to Belali Sullivan on St. Simons.

"I ain know bout St. Simon but Cotto use tuh talk bout cousin Belali Sullivan.

829 "Yes'm, I membuh muh gran too. Belali he frum Africa  
192 but muh gran she come by Bahamas. She speak funny wuds we didn know. She say 'mosojo' an sometime 'sojo' wen she mean pot. Fuh watuh she say 'deloe' an fuh fyuh she say 'diffy.' She tell us, 'Tak sojo off diffy.'

"Wen sumpn done she say, 'Bim-boga-rum.' Yuh tell uh sumpn wut is a suhprise lak somebody die, den she say, 'Ma-foo-bey, ma-foo-bey.'

829 "She ain tie uh head up lak I does, but she weah a loose  
wite clawt da she trow obuh uh head lak veil an it hang loose on uh shoulduh. I ain know wy she weah it dataway, but I tink she ain lak a tight ting roun uh head.

829 "She make funny flat cake she call 'saraka.' She make  
252 um same day ebry yeah, an it big day. Wen dey finish, she call us in, all duh chillun, an put in hans lill flat cake an we eats it. Yes'm, I membuh how she make it. She wash rice, an po off all duh watuh. She let wet rice sit all night, an in mawnin rice is all swell. She tak dat rice an put it in wooden mawtuh, an beat it tuh paste wid wooden pestle. She add honey, sometime shuguh, an make it in flat cake wid uh hans. 'Saraka' she call um."

• 412 Before the cabin stood a crudely constructed wooden mortar made many years before by Katie's husband and used originally for the pounding of rice. A deep basin-like aperture had been hewn out of the center of a log which was about three feet long and from eighteen to twenty inches wide.<sup>43</sup>

115 Across the dusty road from Katie Brown's another nar-

2: Jones-Jackson L-5 (1973-1986) 1987  
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23  
South Carolina

252  
• 412



(171) Mortars made from palm trees are traditionally used to pound rice and corn.  
Similar mortars are still used throughout Africa.

[P-112]

*Mrs. Betsy Pinckney*

**YOU GOT TO WORK LIKE THE DEVIL**

159  
 46  
 241  
 Oh Jesus, that hoe! When I married to Josh, I couldn't lift the ground. Didn't know nothing 'bout lift ground. Josh, he work in the field. Milk the cow, then plow, man, plow. Sometime he dig the bed so wide if you reach your hoe, you better have a good long hoe stick.

(429)  
 (492)  
 We used to work for our rent and our food. You got to work like the Devil! Plant your cotton. Plant your corn. You have to work five task for that land and that house. Take oxen and plow. You have to work that 'fore you work your crop. That's you house. That's the rent. If he calls every week, you'll have to go.

159  
 • (412)  
 In 1918 we move to our own place, where I am now. Josh go in the road and cut all them bush. Work with the ax and hoe. Some people carry the ax, some carry the hoe. Chop them bush. Cleared out the way for the cart and buggy come down. Then we had a crowd of children in there. And we had 'tato. When you throw 'em on the ground, just like somebody throwing dice on the floor. I had eleven head of children. And every one of my children had children. With the grands and the great-grands I have a hundred and forty-odd.

*Mr. Willie Hunter*

**WE RAISE GOOD THAT TIME**

I was raised right around here. Know the Bligens long before I ever marry they daughter. I know Bligen long time. My wife. All nice people. If they weren't nice people, I don't go in their family, I be in some other family. Nice people, man.

159  
 597  
 They like me too. 'Cause I have plenty manners to them. Course I raise up that way, 'cause I raise up through the old school. Plenty manners. You had to have manners to them old people that time, 'cause in that time anybody could of lick you, you been sassy with any people. But now, we don't do that.

159  
 See if anybody lick me, outside my aunt what raise me, if I go home and tell Auntie that somebody lick me, I get some more lick. The best thing I do, keep my mouth shut and take what I get. Oh we raise good that time. Now things changed a whole lot. But I try to raise my children like I was raised.

4: Carawan & Carawan B,2-5 (1959-1988) 1989  
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23  
South Carolina  
Johns Island

137  
291  
• 412



[p. 23]

4: Carawan & Carawan B,Z-5 (1959-1988) 1989  
NN23 Sea Islanders NN23  
South Carolina  
Johns Island

291  
313



291  
313  
412  
342  
419



[p. 37]

9: Parrish B-4,5 (ca.1916-1941) 1942

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Georgia

St. Simon's Island

252  
142  
291  
412



8. Beating Rice in Darien

[Facing p. 49]

## Concerning Slave Songs and Their Preservation

13

535 dances as "The Buzzard Lope," "Juba," "The Mobile Buck," and "The Mosquito Dance" (accompanied by an occasional exclamation of "Slap 'em! Slap 'em!")—and they may be forthcoming. Another interesting dance, done to the tune of "New Rice an' Okra," is used to scuff off the outside husks of the rice and to prepare it for beating in a hand-hewn mortar exactly like that used on the West Coast of Africa (Illustrations 7 and 8). The pestles are heavy, and, to be wielded effectively, require the aid of rhythmic songs.

535 There are also the ring-play dances, which appear to be a combination of African play songs and the old English play-party or ring games. In most of them, the action reflects white influence; but to have a variation of the Virginia Reel done to an ominous African tune, with the threatening words, "Lawyer's suit!" repeated after and overlapping each narrative phrase, indicates such a fifty-fifty division as is often found in the religious songs.

533 One ring-play song uses "Sangaree" for its refrain, and in so doing gives a clue to its age. Few people today know that ante-bellum planters were refreshed by this West Indian drink which consisted of a chilled mixture of wine, sugar, nutmeg, and water.<sup>14</sup>

535 In the coastal section of South Carolina and Georgia, the ring-shout, a semi-religious survival of African dancing—not a vocal performance as the name implies—is accompanied by a melodious chant which generally concerns itself with the simplest of Biblical narratives and admonitions, as in

O Eve, where is Adam? O Eve—  
Adam in the Garden pickin' up leaves.

533 In "Knee-bone I Call You, Knee-bone Bend," tones are used that baffle any transcription; and the leader frequently drops a whole octave in singing the rhythmically prolonged You, to the wonderment of white musicians unused to the trick so often employed by the old-time Negroes. In this musical chant warning is given that on Monday morning, and all other days of the week, the Lord calls upon you to get down on your knees and pray. On one of the old Heyward plantations bordering on the Combahee River there occurs a dance (clearly an African survival) which, from its description, seems similar to one I saw performed by primitive Negroes in the north of Haiti. There is another exotic performance on St. Simon's

<sup>14</sup> "Julep sangaree" was in use before 1840. Dr. L. D. Turner believes, however, that the song got its refrain from the African word sangari, meaning a ring dance.

## Rice Songs

227

533  
539

You know the way an' you wouldn't come home  
 Yes Lord, I know the way.  
 Every sheep know his shepherd's voice  
 Yes Lord, I know the way.

(535) The faster part was sung as two hops were made on one foot while the other did the scuffling.

Make a jump, jump for joy!  
 Make a jump, jump for joy!

This phrase was repeated over and over, with the variation:

Sheep jump, jump for joy!

243 The planters believed that rice was only good when freshly beaten,<sup>17</sup> and the sheaves kept for family use were put in a well-ventilated mouse-proof loft. The commercial rice was threshed in a mill, but the husks were left on, and even in cities, in the South, the rice was beaten fresh every day. The mortars were generally hollowed out of cypress or hard pine logs and used upright, although on Sapelo I have seen some made of immense pieces of squared timber laid flat so that the beating took place against the grain. The pestles had two ends, one sharp for bruising the husks and removing them, the other flat for whitening. Boys or women generally did the beating. They would grasp the pestles in the middle, raising and letting (461) them fall so quickly and evenly, to the rhythm of what was more like a chant than a song, that the task was not considered difficult.

243 171 <sup>17</sup> William Ellis in his *History of Madagascar*, 1838, makes it clear that our early rice planters got their ideas about the culture and preparation of rice for the table directly from Madagascar. In *Seed from Madagascar* Duncan Clinch Heyward tells us that the seed of the Carolina Gold rice was brought from that land by a sea captain about the year 1685, but Mr. Ellis furnishes the African end of the picture. After describing planting and harvesting methods, he explains the laborious process by which rice was made ready for cooking. "The rice, which is kept in the husk in a sort of granary, is made ready for use in such quantities only as the daily consumption of the family may require." In minute detail he explains that it is then beaten in a mortar by two people using large wooden pestles, about five feet in length, so as to break and remove the outer husk without breaking the grain. The rice is taken out, and separated from the husk by winnowing; it is then beaten in the mortar a second time for the purpose of taking off the inner skin. The process is repeated a third time; tossed again in the winnowing fan, then washed and cooked. It was reported by Francis Moor that on the West Coast of Africa men worked the corn ground, and women and girls the rice ground. Jobson, another West African traveler, says: "the wives do all the hard labor such as cleaning and pounding rice . . . which is done in mortars with great staves." One explorer mentioned that rice was so plentiful in Kongo and Angola that it hardly bears any price.

## Slave Songs of the Georgia Sea Islands

533  
461  
264  
[171]

After death I got to stan' a tes'  
 After death I got to stan' a tes'  
 Oh Lordy, after death I got to stan' a tes'  
 Lord, I wouldn' mind dyin' if dyin' was all.

533  
461  
264  
[171]

Dishwashing is another of the monotonous jobs which invite the accompaniment of flowing song. In my own kitchen I have heard dishes disposed of to a tune which, surprisingly enough, has an Algerian counterpart. I heard it first, from my hotel on the heights of Constantine, played on a primitive pipe in the little Berber village at the base of the cliff far below. It was repeated over and over—that is why I am familiar with it. Apparently, the tune bothered a cow, for her bellowing frequently gave me a respite. The air is lovely, but when heard by the hour it is not so enjoyable.

(539)

I want a die easy when I die  
 O when I die.  
 I want a die easy when I die  
 I want a die easy when I die—Shout salvation as I fly  
 I want a die easy when I die.

252  
354

Until after the War Between the States stoves were unknown in the South, and cooking was done mostly in large fireplaces with cranes and hooks for hanging pots and kettles over the heat. Meat was roasted in "tin kitchens" placed in front of the fire, although the remains of an enormous brick oven at Cannon's Point indicate the part it played in the large-scale hospitality of the Couper family. Cooking, in fact, was one of those interrupted jobs which required undivided attention, and for that reason, perhaps, I never heard of a good cook who sang.

248  
561  
461  
[112]

On St. Simon's and Jekyll Islands great quantities of cotton were grown. The best description of the process was given by Captain Basil Hall in 1828. He tells how the "task" varied with the heaviness of the work. In describing the "listing" of the ground—breaking it with a broad cotton-field hoe—he said that "a full hand lists half an acre." Janey Jackson must have been a full hand, for she told of doing her half-acre and thinking nothing of it. She and Floyd White's parents belonged to the [533] caters, and both sang a tune which was a favorite for hoeing cotton. They agreed that "June month was a ha'd month": the weeds grew fast and the sun was hot.

11: Johnson H-4,5 (no date) 1930  
(1525-ca. 1880)

NN23 Sea Islanders NN23

South Carolina

St. Helena Island

48

A SOCIAL HISTORY OF THE SEA ISLANDS

248  
444  
567 From then until August a few hands put in a half acre or less a day, planting in all sixteen acres of potatoes. Work on the cotton crop stopped about the middle of July. Fripp finished planting about the first of September when he had two acres of potato slips put in for seed and three-fourths of an acre of turnip seed sown.

By November 29 he had gathered and finished "breaking in" the corn crop, having made 650 bushels, less than 12 bushels to the acre. By December 9 he had finished digging potatoes, having made a poor crop, and four days later he had gathered all the cotton. On December 13 the hands began processing the cotton and did not finish ginning the crop of thirty-five bales until February 12, just in time to begin listing the soil in preparation for drilling in the cotton seed a few weeks later. During the slack periods, the hands had been engaged in digging and hauling marsh mud to manure the fields, cutting marsh grass for fodder and also for fertilizer, cutting and sawing wood, and ditching fields.<sup>2</sup>

248  
• (412)  
175  
248  
407  
493 St. Helena Island planters, as a rule, obtained the simplest of farm implements for their laborers. Most of the work in cultivating sea-island cotton was done with the hoe. In 1822 there was not a plough or scythe on Edisto, one of the best cultivated of the Sea Islands. The largest plantations had only two or three carts; the use of oxen was unknown.<sup>3</sup> By 1844 nearly every plantation on the island had a cart and mule or yoke of oxen to every six taskable hands. At the close of the ante-bellum period, however, John F. Townsend was the only planter who

<sup>2</sup> MS, John E. Fripp, Bluff Plantation Book.

<sup>3</sup> Seabrook, *Memoir on the Cultivation of Cotton*, p. 25.

11: Johnson H-4,5 (no date) 1930

(1525-ca. 1880)

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South Carolina

St. Helena Island

THE SLAVE COMMUNITY

135

his wife's bones and take them to his house so that he could have 'he wit' me always."<sup>24</sup>

FAMILY LIFE

In their attempt to impress the sacredness of marriage upon their slaves, the whites were often discouraged by the low value which the slave women placed upon chastity. Wives were as prone as husbands to break the marriage vows. In fact, the female tended to be the dominant sex in slave life. It was decidedly to the advantage of a black man to have the good will of one of the women of the plantation, for life thereby was made much easier. On the plantations where clothes were issued by the yard, it was customary for the women to do the sewing for the family so that a husband was almost as dependent upon his wife for a new suit of clothes as he was upon his master; but, on the plantations where superannuated women were delegated to do all the plantation sewing and mending, the slave men were somewhat more independent of their women.

The weekly issuance of rations, a predominant portion of which was corn, was also dealt out in the bulk and must not only be shelled but pounded into grits before being cooked. It was customary for the women and children to assemble at the cornhouse on Monday, an hour or so before "fust dark," to receive the weekly allowance from the driver. Kneeling or sitting upon the ground with her children about her, each woman shelled the corn, using a cob to increase her speed. On some of the plantations there were improvised mortars for shelling corn, made of

<sup>24</sup> Information obtained from J. Swinton Whaley, Little Edisto, S. C., and from a personal interview with the Negro.

11: Johnson H-4,5 (no date) 1930  
(1525-ca. 1880)

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(285) huge logs hollowed at one end. At these, two stood with their rude pestles striking alternately up and down. After the corn was shelled, the driver poured all upon a large hide or blanket and measured each person's portion into a basket, made by hand from pine straw and palmetto. After receiving the corn, the women ground it into grits, each waiting her turn at one of the hand-mills near the cornhouse.

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262 With the aid of her children, the mother prepared supper from the rations just issued, supplementing the corn and salt pork with "turnip salad" or cow-peas from the "patch" back of the cabin, sweet potatoes roasted in the ashes, oysters or crabs from the creek, or with luxuries which she had bought at one of the island stores. Into the black pot placed on a bed of coals on the hearth went the grits to be boiled until thick and tender, or, perhaps, vegetables and fat pork might be cooking there. If so, the corn meal, which had come out of the mill together with the grits, would be made into a pone, cooked either on the open hearth or, if the family were thrifty, in a frying pan over the coals. The elders first helped themselves from the pot, and then turned it over to the children who ate to their satisfaction, and finally relinquished it to the dogs, invariably a part of the slave family, who licked it clean for the next meal.<sup>25</sup>

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264 The mother also prepared the hasty breakfast eaten just after the conch blew at "day clean," if, indeed, the workers took time for breakfast, and filled her own and

<sup>25</sup> See Laura M. Towne, "Pioneer Work on the Sea Islands," *Southern Workmen*, July, 1901.